

BOOK REVIEWS

NIKOLAJ SERIKOFF. *Arabic Medical Manuscripts of the Wellcome Library. A Descriptive Catalogue of the Ḥaddād Collection (WMS Arabic 401–487)*, Sir Henry Wellcome Asian Series 6, ed. Ch. Burnett, D. Wujastyk, P.U. Unschuld, Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2005, pp. xiii + 553, thumb nail index (109 pl.), 1 CD disk 17×24.5 cm. ISBN-10: 90 04 14798 5, € 175.00, US\$ 236.00

As a scholar the graduate of the Moscow University Nikolaj Serikoff entirely belongs to the St Petersburg academic school of Classical Arab Studies. His research methods to a major extent were influenced by the traditions laid by the eminent scholars of St Petersburg University such as Baron Victor Rosen, Professors Ignatius Krachkovsky and Alexandre Vasiliev to name but a few, who paid special attention to a detailed linguistic and historical analysis of the Medieval Islamic and Christian manuscript tradition. Holding since the mid nineties the post of the Assistant Curator and subsequently the Asian Collections Librarian at the Wellcome Library for the History and Understanding of Medicine (London), Serikoff pursued his interest in making the Library's unique Oriental manuscript collections available to the widest audience.¹

The volume under review is the first part of a descriptive catalogue of the Arabic medical manuscripts preserved in the Wellcome Library. It contains detailed descriptions of the Arabic manuscripts, initially collected by Dr Sāmī Ibrāhīm Ḥaddād (1890–1957), which were in 1986 purchased through Sotheby's by the Wellcome Trust. The previous catalogue of the Ḥaddād collection of Arabic manuscripts,² built on the traditional principles, does not reflect the present level of manuscript studies and cannot be used for retrieval of these manuscripts now within the Wellcome collections.³

According to a number of principles developed by Serikoff for the cataloguing of Middle Eastern manuscripts (pp. 3–8), the unit for a manuscript description has to be a

¹ He was among those who initiated publication of a splendid popular book about these collections: *Pearls of the Orient. Asian Treasures from the Wellcome Library*, ed. N. Allan, London and Chicago: Serindia Publications, 2003.

² F.S. Ḥaddād, H.H. Biesterfeldt, *Fihris al-maḥṭūṭāt at-ṭibbiya al-'arabiya fi maktabat ad-Duktūr Sāmī Ibrāhīm Ḥaddād*, Ḥalab, 1984.

³ Originally the library of Dr Ḥaddād, the famous Lebanese physician and historian of medicine, comprised 335 codices in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Syriac, Hebrew and Armenian. From this collection only 87 Arabic manuscripts were offered for sale and were acquired by the Wellcome Trust as a single lot. Their complete list with the former shelf numbers is given by N. Serikoff in Appendix 1 (pp. 493–4). In Appendix 2 he carefully enumerated 22 Arabic manuscripts of this collection, which were not purchased by the Wellcome Library (pp. 495–6).

codex, not work. Each codex has therefore to be considered as a collective product of the efforts of its author, scribe, binder and frequently its illuminator. This approach allows a modern researcher to view a medieval manuscript as an entity in its cultural and historical context.

The content of work/ works contained by a manuscript still remains its most important and valuable part. In describing the manuscript contents, Serikoff is the first who on a regular basis includes long lists of chapter titles or initial words in case such chapter titles are absent (see the section "Detailed Content"). These lists are of special value, since eventually, being arranged alphabetically in a separate section, they will contribute to the identification of anonymous or defective copies and/ or fragments. However, even in the present state a comparison of the content of different copies of the same work, for instance, *Mūğiz al-Qānūn*, the well-known abridgement on Ibn Sīnā's *al-Qānūn* (cf. WMS Arabic 405 /Text 1/, 435, 436 and 437), clearly demonstrates a considerable degree of standardization inherent in the manuscript text of this reference book.

Another new feature of the catalogue under review is "a parameter of *pace*, i.e. a sequence of repeated patterns which facilitate the description and identification of the hand and the layout of the whole page" (p. 6). Serikoff describes the pace with a formula comprising resemblance (to a certain calligraphic style), the number of lines to the page, density, the ratio of *alif* to *bā'*, angulation of *alif*, angulation of the bar of *kāf*. Unfortunately, in his definition of Δ (density) there was a *lapsus calami*: this parameter is calculated as the "average number of connected letters per line multiplied" not "by the number of letters to the page" (p. 6), but evidently by the number of lines to the page. The example cited below (p. 7) entirely confirms that correction⁴. If Serikoff's suggestion is correct, the pace eventually will become a universally applied tool for the classification and description of Arabic hands. However, until now the pace has been applied to less than one hundred manuscripts, and we still need more material to make this very tempting suggestion into a working method.

To view the paces, Serikoff has supplied the catalogue with a CDR disk which contains specimens of the hands found in all the 87 manuscripts. Unfortunately, the hard copy of the catalogue contains only a thumb-nail index, but not the full-size plates of the manuscripts specimens. Some specialists in computing in humanities have already expressed their worries about the possibility to read contemporary CDR disks by using the software that will be developed in the years to come.

Along with the specimens of handwriting, Serikoff provided the user with images of the manuscripts' bindings classified by him as "Oriental" (cf. WMS Arabic 437, 439,

⁴ Cf. N. Serikoff, "Image and Letter: "Pace" in Arabic Script (a thumb-nail index as a tool for a catalogue of Arabic manuscripts. Principles and criteria for its construction)," *Manuscripta Orientalia* 7, 4 (December 2001): 57: "Density is given in the form of a formula (number of segments by the number of lines."

448, 457, 458, 464), “Christian” (cf. WMS Arabic 411, 422, 423, 443, 456), and “European” (cf. WMS Arabic 403, 405, 421, 436).

To facilitate the use, the Catalogue in Appendix includes fourteen indices: “Concordance of manuscripts described in the present catalogue,” “List of manuscripts which were not purchased by the Wellcome Library (from Dr Sāmī Ḥaddād’s collection),” “List of dated manuscripts,” “Titles of works,” “Arabic titles of works,” “Index of authors,” “Index of subjects,” “List of *basmalas*,” “Index of *incipits*,” “Index of personal names,” “Table of measurements and *miṣṭaras*” arranged by shelf-marks, by the height of spines and by sizes of *miṣṭaras*, “Pace-tables,” “Concordance of the images of the manuscripts described in the present catalogue and their storage numbers in the Wellcome Medical Photographic Library” and the already mentioned “Thumb Nail index” of images.

This erudite volume, however, is not completely free from some misprints and mistakes. A group of errors is connected with the transliteration of the Arabic titles (in particular regarding the rules of the pausal reading). The list given below is representative, but not exhaustive:

Page	Printed	Read
106	‘an l-Abdān al-insānīya	‘an al -Abdān al-insānīya
129	Waṣīyat Ibn Sīnā Waṣīyat Ibn al-Baiṭār	Waṣīyat (or Waṣīyyat) Ibn Sīnā Waṣīyat (or Waṣīyyat) Ibn al-Baiṭār
177	li-Kāffati l-Aṭṭibbā’	li-Kāffat al -Aṭṭibbā’
210	‘Umdat fi Ṣinā‘at al-Ġirāḥa	‘Umda fi Ṣinā‘at al-Ġirāḥa
221	fī al-Adwiya al-muḡarraba	fī-l -Adwiya al-muḡarraba
229	fī Waṣāyā yantafa‘a bi-hā	fī Waṣāyā y untafa‘ u bi-hā
253	Waṣīyat fī inna-nā bi-ay al-Mu‘ālīḡāt nabtadī	Waṣīyat (or Waṣīyyat) fī annā (ĪĀY) bi- ayy al-Mu‘ ā lāḡāt nabtadī
255	Rauḡat al-‘Iṭar	Rauḡat al-‘ Iṭr
313	‘inda al-Ḥukamā’	‘inda- l -Ḥukamā’
319	Risāla fī ar-Ruḡānīyāt	Risāla fī-r -Ruḡānīyāt
336	‘Āfiyat al-barriya	‘Āfiyat al- bari ya (or al- bariyya)
392	Malḡūzāt fī al-‘Ayn	Malḡūzāt fī-l -‘Ayn
409	Al-Ġāmi‘ fī l-Kīmiyā	Al-Ġāmi‘ fī- l -Kīmiyā
442	Marwī li-Daf‘ al-Wabā’	Marwī li-Daf‘ al-Wabā’
487	Risālat fī Manāfi‘ al-Adwiya	Risāla fī Manāfi‘ al-Adwiya

However, mistakes mentioned in this review cannot devalue the present reference work, which will become a handbook for every specialist involved in the study of the history of the Medieval Middle Eastern medicine.

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